

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Victoria Primary School, Newtownards, County Down

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No (401-1656)

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in May 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Victoria Primary School, Newtownards, County Down (401-1656)

Introduction

The original inspection in January 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Victoria Primary School as having the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the teaching staff. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 9 May 2019.

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that none of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspectors. The principal and designated teacher co-operated with the inspection team in relation to safeguarding responsibilities. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

Focus of the inspection

Owing to the school's participation in industrial action:

- the inspection was unable to evaluate fully the school's capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school planning; and
- lines of inquiry were not selected by the school from the development plan priorities.

Key findings

- The group of year 6 children spoke confidently of their understanding of the school's inclusive and caring ethos and their enjoyment of a wide variety of learning opportunities which develop their interests and self-reliance. They appreciate the various opportunities to take responsibility and to contribute to decision-making processes with the staff taking account of their views and ideas.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.

Safeguarding

- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The inspector spoke with a group of year 6 children who reported that they feel very secure and happy in school. They explained how they appreciate the 'Anti-Bullying Ambassador' roles and the school's system of positive rewards and know how to keep safe online. They also indicated the importance of the helpful support and counselling arrangements the school makes available when they need it. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children. The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

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